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SUBJECT: TURKEY: OFFICIALS HOPEFUL NEW GOVERNMENT WILL  
JUMP-START STALLED EU REFORMS

REF: A. ANKARA 1660

[B](#). ANKARA 0971

[C](#). ANKARA 6593

1.(SBU) Summary and comment. Turkish officials and European diplomats are optimistic the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) will use its strong electoral mandate to revive what has so far been a "lost year" for EU reforms. Turkey's EU Secretariat, which oversees harmonization efforts, will urge the newly formed government to move speedily on two dormant issues: the Law on Foundations and Turkish Penal Code Article 301 (insulting "Turkishness"). Concrete action on these issues would help Turkey avoid a harshly critical EU progress report in November, and lead to opening negotiations on up to three additional chapters during the Portuguese Presidency. Our European contacts believe opposition parties will be unsuccessful if they attempt to freeze EU-related reforms. AKP's ability to mend fences with the opposition while rebuilding public support for EU accession will determine whether the new government can jump-start the stalled process. End summary and comment.

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EU Reforms Slow During Parliamentary Elections  
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2.(SBU) Incoming Secretariat Political Chief Cem Kahyaoglu told us July 23 that 2007 thus far has been a "lost year" for EU reforms in Turkey. Although some technical-level progress has continued, the GOT achieved nothing on the important political issues of most interest to the EU, such as easing restrictions on religious minorities and freedom of speech. The contentious elections were to blame, rather than one particular person or party, he said. European opposition to Turkey's accession, from France and others, made it difficult for campaigning politicians to take pro-EU positions, contributing to the slowdown.

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GOT Plans to Make Up For Lost Time  
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3.(SBU) Kahyaoglu expected AKP, which captured 46.6% of the vote, to use its strong mandate to revive the process. The Secretariat will urge the new government to take immediate

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action on two top priorities: re-passing the Law on Foundations and amending TPC Article 301. In November 2006, President Sezer vetoed a progressive new Foundations law that would have expanded the property rights of Turkey's minorities (ref C). Kahyaoglu said the Secretariat wants Parliament to re-pass the bill in the same form. Outgoing Secretariat Political Chief Ahmet Dogan told us that amending

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Article 301, which continues to damage Turkey's international standing, would be the single most important way to prevent a harshly critical annual EU progress report this November.

4.(SBU) Both officials agreed that achieving these results in the compressed time frame would be difficult. The new government would need to repeat the time-consuming legislative process for both Foundations and Article 301 bills, and some vocal opposition from the Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is virtually certain. Still, the AKP's strong position in the new government, combined with international pressure, makes near-term reform on these issues likely, according to Kahyaoglu. Concrete results would help the Portuguese Presidency to open chapters on Energy, Consumer and Health Protection, and Trans-European Networks.

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Europeans Also Optimistic  
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5.(SBU) Several EU member-state contacts were relieved by AKP's victory, which they see as providing an opportunity for enhanced relations between Ankara and Brussels. A Dutch diplomat told us the overwhelming popular support for AKP will provide them the necessary leverage to end a period of stagnation in reforms. According to a British contact, the EU wants to see the new Parliament passing or amending four

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crucial laws before the November progress report: the Law on Foundations, Article 301, the Ombudsman law, and Law on the Court of Auditors. These contacts agree that CHP and MHP maneuvering may slow, but ultimately will not block, long-awaited reforms on political issues such as Article 301.

6.(SBU) Sema Kilicer, at the EU Commission's Turkey Delegation, told us AKP no longer has any excuse to delay on badly needed political reforms. The consensus at the Commission's Ankara office is that a new, dynamic, reform-minded Justice Minister is key to reviving a stalled process. Former Justice Minister Cemil Cicek had been unable to infuse a liberal-leaning spirit into the MOJ's backward thinking bureaucracy, Kilicer said. The Commission will be watching this ministerial appointment closely.

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